

latirostris, redbreasted flycatcher *Muscicapa superciliaris*, blacknaped blue flycatcher *Hypothymis azurea* and paradise flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, when I noticed a vigorously vibrating web of the giant wood spider *Nephila maculata*, which was about 1.5 m in diameter.

I also saw a blacknaped blue flycatcher at a distance of 1 m from the centre of the web, where the spider was resting. On closer inspection, I realised that the left wing of the bird was entangled in one of the main spokes of the web. The bird was alive but exhausted, as all its desperate attempts to free itself proved futile.

The giant wood spider is the largest orb weaving spider in India (K. Vijaylakshmi and Preston Ahimaz, SPIDERS: AN INTRODUCTION, 1993)

and is known to feed on large insects, but I am not aware whether birds also form a part of its diet. Moreover, it was surprising to see a bird weighing 9 - 14 gm, several times heavier than the spider, helplessly entangled in the web.

I have read about the bird eating spiders of the equatorial forests of South America, but to see a blacknaped blue flycatcher trapped in a web was a memorable experience. I waited at the spot for 45 minutes, but eventually had to leave due to bad weather.

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ANISH P. ANDHERIA
2, Sagar Building,
V.P. Road,
Andheri (West), Mumbai 400 058.

14. HOUSE SPARROW FEEDING ON TENDER LEAVES OF NEEM (*AZADIRACHTA INDICA*)

The house sparrow (*Passer domesticus indicus*), a common bird feeds on a variety of food items. THE HAND BOOK OF BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali and Ripley 1987, 10: 670) describes the food of the species as mostly grass, weed seeds and cereal grains, also fruits and flower buds, tender shoots, kitchen scraps and insects.

On March 20, 1996, at my residence at Raipur, a female bird was seen plucking a fresh tender leaf from a neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), carrying it to the ground below, holding it in the bill and placing it on the ground. In order to feed on it, the sparrow placed the leaf

under its toe, snapped off a fragment and fed on it. This was repeated thrice and in the process half the leaf was eaten. Thereafter, the bird flew away, leaving the remaining part of the leaf on the ground.

Though the species is known to feed on tender shoots, feeding on a bitter leaf of the neem tree is reported for the first time.

May 25, 1996

A.M.K. BHAROS
B-101, Gayatri Nagar,
P.O. Shanker Nagar,
Raipur 492 007,
Madhya Pradesh.

15. *CALOTES VERSICOLOR* FEEDING ON *LYCODON AULICUS*

According to Smith (1935), Daniel (1983) and Tikader and Sharma (1992), *Calotes versicolor* is primarily an insectivorous arboreal lizard, but also takes small birds and their nestlings, frogs, centipedes and vegetable matter.

On June 1, 1998, on a regular visit to the

Nal-Sandol Forest Nursery near Jhadol village in Udaipur dist., Rajasthan, I observed a male *Calotes versicolor* which was swallowing a small *Lycodon aulicus*, approximately 25 cm in length in a nursery-bed at about 0930 h. The anterior half of the snake was already swallowed and it took nearly 6 minutes to complete the process.

After swallowing the prey, it slowly climbed up a *Ricinus communis* tree and settled itself on a twig and remained motionless till 1530 h. A garden lizard feeding on a snake is unusual, hence worthy of placing on record.

Sep. 15, 1998

SATISH KUMAR SHARMA
Range Forest Officer,
Aravalli Afforestation Project,
Jhadol (F.) Dist. Udaipur,
Rajasthan 313 702.

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16. PYTHON PREYING ON RAT SNAKE

It was raining in Panna National Park, Madhya Pradesh, during late June, 1998. One day, while I was sampling for bear scats down a road, a forest guard I met on the way informed me that a python had been found lying about 100 m off the road. Eager to break the monotony of sampling for scats, I went about looking for it. It was close to the *Kheriah* grassland along a stream bordered with a few riparian trees. I found this young python lying in a small pool of water, holding on to a rat snake effortlessly, biting the mid-body and smothering it. The rat snake helplessly tried to get out of the stranglehold. The python was about 2.1 m long, and the rat snake was a full grown one of about 1.8 m long, but only one-fifth or one-sixth as thick as the python. I watched them for about 15 minutes and left the place so as not to disturb them any longer. I assume that the python must have eaten the rat

snake after killing it.

Though seeing a python, particularly during the rainy season, is not unusual in Panna, I was surprised to see it preying on a rat snake. I have not come across reports of python feeding on other snakes. Whitaker (1978) reports mammals and birds as the major food of python, and Daniel (1983) adds monitor lizard and various frogs to its reported prey. Bhupathy and Vijayan (1989) report the various mammal and bird food items eaten by python in Bharatpur, but they have not, in their two year study, recorded python preying on another snake.

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K. YOGANAND
Wildlife Institute of India,
P.O. Box, 18, Chandrabani,
Dehradun 248 001,
Uttar Pradesh.

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17. ABERRANT BANDED RACERS *ARGYROGENA FASCIOLATUS*

(With two plates)

In January 1998, the second author found a snake in Ghorawadi, near Talegaon, Pune dist.,

Maharashtra. It had nine supralabials on each side and 97 paired subcaudals. Barring these two